

Middlesex University Research Repository

An open access repository of

Middlesex University research

<http://eprints.mdx.ac.uk>

Fillery-Travis, Annette and Cox, Elaine (2014) Researching coaching. In: The Complete Handbook of Coaching. Cox, Elaine, Bachkirova, Tatiana and Clutterbuck, David A., eds. Sage, pp. 445-459. ISBN 9781446276150. [Book Section]

Published version (with publisher's formatting)

This version is available at: <https://eprints.mdx.ac.uk/13143/>

Copyright:

Middlesex University Research Repository makes the University's research available electronically.

Copyright and moral rights to this work are retained by the author and/or other copyright owners unless otherwise stated. The work is supplied on the understanding that any use for commercial gain is strictly forbidden. A copy may be downloaded for personal, non-commercial, research or study without prior permission and without charge.

Works, including theses and research projects, may not be reproduced in any format or medium, or extensive quotations taken from them, or their content changed in any way, without first obtaining permission in writing from the copyright holder(s). They may not be sold or exploited commercially in any format or medium without the prior written permission of the copyright holder(s).

Full bibliographic details must be given when referring to, or quoting from full items including the author's name, the title of the work, publication details where relevant (place, publisher, date), pagination, and for theses or dissertations the awarding institution, the degree type awarded, and the date of the award.

If you believe that any material held in the repository infringes copyright law, please contact the Repository Team at Middlesex University via the following email address:

eprints@mdx.ac.uk

The item will be removed from the repository while any claim is being investigated.

See also repository copyright: re-use policy: <http://eprints.mdx.ac.uk/policies.html#copy>

31

Researching Coaching

Annette Fillery-Travis and Elaine Cox

Research into the activity of coaching has been gradually increasing over the last two decades and there is now a developing evidence base for the subject. In addition there are academic journals dedicated to coaching, as well as a growing number of subject specific journals that publish on the topic. Much of the research to date has been practitioner led and is focused on exploring how coaching works in certain, mainly organizational, situations or on distinguishing coaching from other applied helping and/or learning approaches in an attempt to carve a distinct niche for coaching.

However, there are still many gaps in the coaching research and the development of the academic debates necessary to grow the profession is slow. This is partly because coaching is multi-disciplinary and little funding is available to support collaborations between university departments, corporate sponsors, practitioners and professional bodies in order to begin to create interdisciplinary discussion and research into coaching itself. So there is a strong need within the discipline for coherent, well-managed programmes of research that can add to the body of academic knowledge. Such research would, of course, need to take account of the cross-disciplinary nature of coaching in order to provide a greater understanding of complex dilemmas impacting on the field and it might include investigating the contributions of different disciplines and exploring new theories, paradigms and methods of research. This necessarily means that research into coaching is either published in the coaching journals or is somewhat marginalized in journals from the disciplinary source. The task of supporting an interdisciplinary research agenda requires coaches and researchers to be aware of the challenge and to work

across the separate disciplines, championing interdisciplinary collaboration and integrating ideas from different subject areas.

Our chapter begins by giving a short overview of recent research on coaching in order to draw out implications for research design. This allows for discussion of a number of methodological and other issues and leads to exploration of how what we perceive as a major gap might begin to be addressed through the use of some little used research methods. We conclude with some thoughts on the way ahead for coaching research. Our aim is to broaden researcher and practitioner perspectives on what is possible in order to encourage further research and debate.

Overview of current coaching research

Whilst undertaking a review of the literature we were struck, like many commentators, by the growth in the number of publications of coaching research in the last decade. We cannot discuss in detail the work and concepts contained in over seven hundred scholarly articles and dissertations recently estimated to be available from the literature (Grant, 2010). Instead we must look to some general themes to allow us to make sense and meaning from this wealth of information: our focus specifically will be to explore how knowledge is developing to serve practitioners in the field.

The most recent reviews (Fillery-Travis & Passmore, 2011; Passmore & Gibbes, 2007; Grant, 2013; Grant & Cavanagh, 2007) have all been concerned with the overall development of the coaching research base, the type of studies reported and the quality of the evidence produced. Specifically they lament the paucity of empirical studies and the small number of rigorous studies, especially those that use a randomized controlled trial design. Some authors even identify this perceived deficit as holding back progress in the professional practice of coaching (Orenstein, 2006). Before we discuss methodological issues in detail we will look at what research is currently available and how it has emerged. First, we consider what the literature has to say concerning what happens as a result of coaching by looking at *outcome studies*, and then we move to explore what actually happens *in* the coaching sessions and the factors which are important to their design and conduct, through reviewing *process studies*.

Outcome studies – what is the outcome of coaching and whose outcome is it?

The large growth in the market for coaching has been a significant driver for outcomes research and the development of appropriate evidence for efficacy (Bennett, 2006). Specifically, buyers of coaching are asking what outcomes should be expected from coaching and what is the return on investment? The first attempts at an answer were through practitioner case studies with measures such as client satisfaction surveys. These commonly identified high levels of satisfaction (>90%) (Fillery-Travis & Lane, 2006) and large estimates of the return on investment figures; in one case greater than 400% (McGovern et al., 2001). Grant (2013) identified 234 outcome studies that had been published between 2000 and 2011.

Recently some randomized uncontrolled and controlled trials (RCTs) have been undertaken, but the numbers of such studies are small. Of the 518 scholarly articles and dissertations published in

the last five years (Grant, 2010) only 186 were empirical studies and of these only 11 are of a randomized controlled design seeking to test the hypothesis that some performance indicator had improved as a result of coaching (Clutterbuck, 2001). The significance of this shift in methodology to RCTs is that this type of study design is generally considered the 'gold standard', providing generalizable and reliable results (Clutterbuck et al., 2001). But at first glance these 11 studies are not persuasive in terms of workplace coaching. Predominantly they focus on an educational setting (MBA students or college students) or supporting a medical outcome (doctors' professional development or health coaching). Indeed the medical arena has developed a dominance in outcomes research as they explore the effectiveness of motivational interviewing (DiLillo, Siegfried, & Smith West, 2003) as a particular mode of coaching for change, influencing health and well-being. Design of studies in this context is relatively straightforward with specific, quantifiable and objective end points (for example, reduction in weight, blood pressure or substance misuse). In 2011 alone there were 197 papers cited within PubMed examining the application of motivational interviewing in supporting behaviour change in, for example, families of asthma sufferers (Garbutt, Highstein, Yan, & Strunk, 2012) and obesity management (Pearson, Irwin, Morrow, & Hall, 2012). In support of this work interviewing skill effectiveness measures for clinicians have been developed (Torres et al., 2012) to allow consistent practice and comparison within research studies.

In workplace coaching, however, Grant (2010) identified only two studies which met the criteria for randomized controlled trials (a PhD dissertation by Deviney 1994 looking at multi-rater feedback to measure the impact of coaching on supervisor behaviour and Duijts, van den Brandt & Swaen (2008) looking at sickness leave reduction). Neither of these studies identified significant improvement on the primary measure but significant change was noted in areas such as general well-being. De Haan (2011) argues that it is only when the studies are less controlled that statistically significant effects are seen. Levenson (2009), for example, reviewed outcome studies looking at behaviour change, perceived effectiveness and 'hard' performance measures. These criteria were selected on the basis that they were progressing along the 'line of sight' from the clients' own performance to a measure of the organizational impact of such performance. In general there was a positive association for the first two elements although the effect lessened as the 'hard' measures were considered. Examples are Evers, Brouwers and Tomic's (2006) and Orenstein's (2005) measurement of leadership behaviours and Wasylyshyn, Gronsky and Haas's (2006) consideration of improvement in emotional competence of high potential employees. It is interesting to note that so far there are only a few studies looking at the impact of coaching specifically upon women (Starman, 2007).

The instruments most commonly used to collect information on perceived effectiveness are customized surveys involving multi-rater feedback (Kombarakaran, Yang, Baker, & Fernandes, 2008; Smither, London, Flautt, Vargas, & Kucine, 2003; Thach, 2002) although Nowack (2009) provides a word of caution about the potential negative impact of the use of these surveys on emotions and sustained behaviour change. The use of more validated instruments such as leadership style assessments, as used by Duijts et al (2008) and goal attainment scaling (Prywes, 2012), is however rare.

An example of a study using the ‘hard’ measures of productivity is that of Olivero, Bane and Kopelman (1997) who identified a positive impact on productivity of public sector managers of the use of coaching in addition to training-only provision in a management development programme. Trying to formalize such measures into a return on investment figure, however, is inherently difficult in human interventions as there are a significant number of factors of potential impact which are un-quantified or unknown. A relatively recent paper by De Meuse, Dai and Lee (2009), however, has undertaken the first meta-analysis study. The paper drew on a limited range of studies, six in total – Evers et al. (2006), Luthans and Peterson (2003), Peterson (1993), Smither et al. (2003), Togel and Nicholson (2005) and Wolfred (2003) – and identifies a return on investment (ROI) of 1.27. However, with such a large range of variation it suggests that we will need to wait until there are over one hundred such studies available for comparison before statistically significant conclusions can be drawn. The literature into what organizations can expect from coaching in terms of outcomes, their specificity and impact is still in its infancy as it relies upon us being able to determine what will work for the many in most situations.

A major stumbling block to the design of RCTs is that we do not, as yet, know what needs to be controlled, what measures are relevant and validated or how to structure a coaching intervention for consistency across many given its unique focus on the individual. It can be argued that this range of unknowns is a contributor to the relatively low impact measured in RCTs to date compared to the fulsome descriptions of change consistently obtained from qualitative studies.

It is perhaps not surprising then that researchers are seeking to simplify the environment and get some control on factors by measuring a specified outcome of coaching in a defined group e.g. improving medical doctors diagnostic skills in one medical condition. The results may be more robust from a methodological viewpoint but perhaps less directly relevant to workplace coaching. Grant (2013) has also argued that financial ROI is an unreliable and insufficient measure of coaching outcomes and that an over-emphasis on financial returns can restrict coaches’ and organizations’ awareness of the full range of positive outcomes possible through coaching and even increase job-related stress and anxiety. He suggests the well-being and engagement framework (WBEF) and goal attainment could give a richer overview of coaching outcomes than financial ROI.

So, if we return to the question of whom the outcomes are for and consider individual clients, then we see that we also need to research the ‘helpfulness’ of the intervention (de Haan, Culpin, & Curd, 2011) and the nature of the intervention itself (Cox, 2012). In the next section we look at this issue by considering how research has focused on the process of coaching.

Process studies

One of the difficulties involved in the design and comparison of outcome studies, including RCTs, is the multitude of factors that affect the outcomes by having an impact on the *process* of coaching. Thus the bulk of methodologies and approaches chosen by researchers tend to reflect the aim of exploring the phenomenon of coaching as a whole. Researchers often favour the collection of qualitative data allowing an exploration of the richness of what is a multi-dimensional process through, for example, in-depth case analyses using mixed methods, or through action research studies of their own practice (for example, McLaughlin, 2013;

Cook, 2013). The aim of such studies is to discover factors influencing the process of coaching through open exploration of the phenomenon. One of us clustered the potential factors operating in the coaching interaction in to the following way: a) coach attributes, b) client attributes, (c) the coaching practice itself and (d) context (Fillery-Travis & Lane, 2006).

Coach attributes have generally been considered in terms of competencies such as interpersonal skills, communication skills and instrumental support for external coaches (Dingman, 2004; Morgan, Harkins, & Goldsmith, 2006) and relationship building, empowering, facilitating and courageous leading for manager coaches (Ellinger & Bostrom, 1998; Ellinger, 2003; Ellinger, Hamlin, & Beattie, 2008; Graham, Wedman, & Kester, 1993; Wenzel, 2001). Wheeler (1978), in particular, has investigated, through case study, how the adoption of such behaviours by manager coaches contributes to organizational goal achievement.

The attributes of the coachee have also been explored; specifically the need for an absence of any performance issues or psychopathology but also the coachee's readiness for change either for leadership (Carey, Philippon, & Cummings, 2011), or through adherence and interest in their own development (Seamons, 2006; Wasylyshyn, 2003). As mentioned issues of gender are relatively under researched with only a small number of process studies looking at diversity (Passmore, 2008; Ruderman & Ohlott, 2005), the same is also true of coaching of members of sexual minorities (Rocco, Landorf, & Delgado, 2009).

There has, as yet, been no comprehensive study of the individual components of the coaching process although three elements are readily identified from the literature as impactful: (1) the coach-client relationship, (2) duration of the process and (3) an identification of both purpose and model of practice. The coach-client relationship is a strong voice within the literature with contributions from de Haan particularly, using critical incident methodology (de Haan & Stewart, 2011; de Haan, 2008a, 2008b). Research in this area is also reviewed by Baron and Morin (2009) in their field study of the relationship and its complementarity with the concept of the 'working alliance'. This coherence is also noted more generally (Berry, Ashby, Gnilk, & Matheny, 2011; Cox, 2010; Kampa-Kokesch, 2002). Baron, Morin and Morin (2011) go on to explore this relationship further in relation to self-efficacy using a pre-post test study design of 30 coachees and their internal coaches. Such studies of relationship have also included manager-as-coach interactions (Gregory & Levy, 2011). All agree on the pivotal role of the relationship and indeed how it can outweigh factors such as the model of coaching itself (de Haan, Culpin, & Curd, 2011).

The duration of the coaching relationship and the process of its ending (Cox, 2010) is often assumed within studies with a seemingly arbitrary selection of length of coaching (ranging from one phone call to 12 months of structured work). There are a few longitudinal studies exploring either the sustainability of behaviour change after coaching (Grant, Green, & Rynsaardt, 2010) or the duration of coaching for optimal impact (Grant, 2003), which found significant change after 6 months but diminishing return at 12 months. Both studies were small scale and are not generalizable.

There is also a significant part of the literature describing, if not testing, coaching models and a few studies comparing those in a specific field or context. For example, coaching models for

leadership development are reviewed in Carey et al. (2011). However, there is still a strong case for delineation of the theoretical orientation of coaching when reporting a study as it is not clear what the impact of a diverse range of models has or will have on outcomes and process (Spence & Oades, 2011).

What constitutes appropriate evidence and to whom is also a critical question. It is a common dilemma that the more relevant to practice the research is the more difficult it is to design an academically rigorous enquiry. The number of factors that need to be taken into account in the 'real world' will often confound the most elegant design. This relevance/rigour debate should not be an either/or debate but more like a spectrum within which we should be clear how we place our research designs and how we discuss them so practitioners can clearly identify where 'trade offs' have occurred and how they impact the usefulness or 'actionability' of the results. As Grant (2013: 33) confirms 'well-conducted qualitative research into coaching can provide important insights that are simply not possible with quantitative approaches'.

The evolution of coaching research

Above we have discussed how in the coaching field there is an evolving empirical literature that uses a multitude of research approaches and produces many forms of evidence concerning the outcomes and the process of coaching. We would like to suggest that research is developing as we might expect for an emerging field. This has already been noted by Grant et al. (2010) who compared coaching research to the research literature of Human Resources Management (HRM). Specifically, as with coaching, HRM practice is described as: outstripping theory, having a perceived lack of a research base, drawing from a range of related disciplines and participating in 'territory' disputes as it explores its contribution in organizational contexts. We have also looked at the history of counselling research as being a close comparator as it has the added similarity of dealing mainly with one-to-one interactions; led by the agenda of the client and looking to effect behaviour change (Hill & Corbett, 1993).

The first research in the counselling field from the 1950s was naturalistic process research seeking to answer the question 'what is happening in a counselling session?' This was overtaken by outcomes research as counselling sought to justify the investment in it (driven by the post WWII need for therapy), process research then went into the laboratory to be conducted under controlled conditions (analogue research) and finally came out into practice again through the use of case studies and qualitative methods to explore practice as performed.

We suggest coaching is undergoing a similar journey as practitioners have initially sought to establish a defined field of practice through sharing their own experience and that of their clients, in case studies and other small scale enquiries. This work appealed to other coaches keen to develop their own professional tool kits. The criterion for such evidence was relevance and resonance with their practice plus efficacy for their client base. As coaching grew in popularity and with it the financial investment by organizations, there was a real driver for outcomes and ROI research appropriate to warrant large-scale investment by organizations. We see a corresponding

increase in the quantifiable and generalizable nature of the evidence sought and with it the scale and controlled nature of the studies. Other factors at play here are the original disciplines of researchers and hence how they view the criteria for quality of evidence. Psychologists, for example, have a rich tradition of quantitative studies seeking generalizable evidence whereas educationalists have a mixed tradition of both qualitative and quantitative studies, as do management and HRM.

However, only if studies are clear about how their findings are applicable in practice, through rigorous reporting of each element of the design and research activity, can practitioners invest in changing their own practice to embrace the results. The development of such pragmatic reporting would enable practitioners to take evidence through the complete research cycle by ‘testing’ it within their practice and then contributing to knowledge by reporting innovations and requirements in the field of practice (Cox, 2011). Following a pragmatic approach apparent truths are ‘tested’ against practice or action and the evidence from application then ‘mapped’ back to relevant theoretical origins, asking: ‘was the recommendation made by the original theory “true” and in what ways should it be modified to meet particular needs?’ Such practice-based evidence would complement and enhance research and drive a pragmatic development of the body of coaching knowledge whose criteria for inclusion is robustness in the field of practice and the field of enquiry.

We suggest that researchers and practitioners alike need to take responsibility for their published research, ensuring it contributes to current debates and the literature *as whole* and designing studies within a theoretical framework to enable comparison with other studies. Such considerations apply as veraciously to smaller studies using qualitative data collection and analysis as they do to quantitative studies. Indeed the issues of potential rigour are just as challenging. Greater coherence and synergy can be achieved by gaining better agreement on the measures we use. Robustness can be enhanced by gathering multiple perspectives; for example, coach, coachee, reports, managers – as well as using several measures self-reports, behavioural or assessments. We also need to clearly identify the theoretical bases and techniques used within any coaching study and the researcher’s adherence to it.

Addressing a gap in coaching research

In this section we now consider whether the two realms of outcomes and process research as presented earlier are a complete story of coaching or whether we are missing a perspective in our exploration of coaching.

From looking at the range of outcome and process research it can be seen that the focus of has been on:

- the context – often using organizational case studies
- the benefits and outcomes of coaching
- how coaching achieves certain outcomes for the client
- the qualities, abilities or skills of the coach
- the improvement of coaching practice and models.

However, the research is relatively silent on a critical part of coaching practice – the intervention or what happens within the coaching relationship itself. Current studies have concentrated upon building a theory of how coaching is used, its utility and payback and even how coaching can be improved for different purposes. For example, studies focus on how coaching works in different contexts and with different groups of people, there are attempts to discover how coaching can change behaviours and attitudes and how coaching can help people achieve goals (their own and those of their organization). There are also studies that look at the motivations and reactions of coaches and clients but in general they stop short of investigating the interaction itself. There is almost no research that focuses on the coaching interaction as a learning intervention with the power to generate powerful changes in thinking.

Using the metaphor of an iceberg we can show how existing research has focused – above and below the ‘waterline’ of coaching, but not at the waterline, i.e. not at the point of intervention itself. In Figure 31.1, the waterline is the point at which the current consciousness of the client and coach come together and interact. They both bring their own values, beliefs and motivations, and it is important to study those, and they are operating in particular cultures and societal settings, and these are vital to study also. But coaching research also needs to focus specifically on what the two people are actually doing together. However, in the research there is little to inform our understanding of the coaching interaction. In de Haan’s (2008) study of critical moments in coaching the findings have the potential to get close to ‘waterline’ activity, but the research stops short of exploring moments in detail. In Cox (2012) the focus is on these issues, but the discussion is conceptual and not followed up with research.

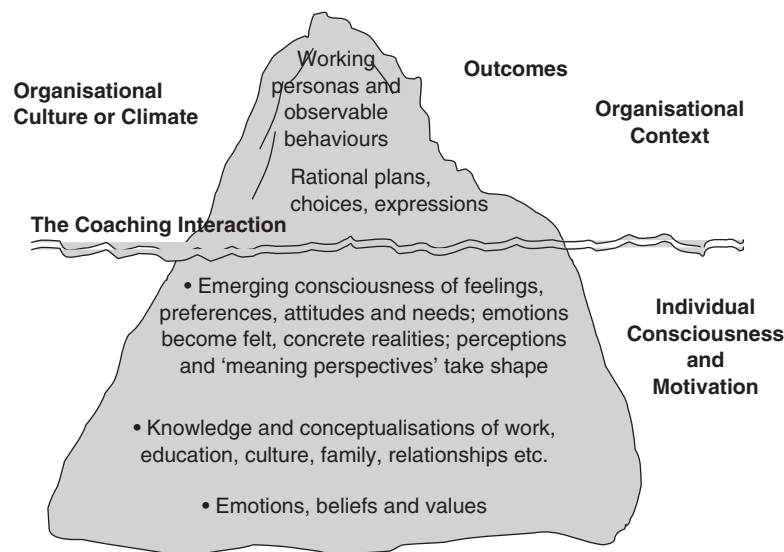


Figure 31.1 The coaching interaction – a neglected area of research

So, researchers have begun to explore: contexts of coaching; behaviour change and measurable behaviours; changes in attitudes, preferences of the client and some elements of process. But rarely has anyone looked at the interaction – the part of the coaching process where the choices, goals and plans are actually discussed and made. The focus on the interaction is glaringly missing from a recent summary of the progress made in coaching research between 2008 and 2012 (Stern and Stout-Rostron, 2013). As suggested, some research looks at the relationship and addresses how coaches and clients interact with each other. But the coaching activity itself, the interaction of the dyad including the elements of listening, questioning, clarifying, reflecting, challenge and thinking have simply not yet been researched.

Figure 31.2 illustrates a range of activities that take place during coaching and which, it could be argued, need more study. As a profession, for example, we need to find out more about how and when coaches use questions as well as their influence on the client; we need to explore how the coach listens and how reflection and thinking are encouraged. In researching these elements of coaching we might also examine how they differ from their use in other helping approaches such as counselling and mentoring.

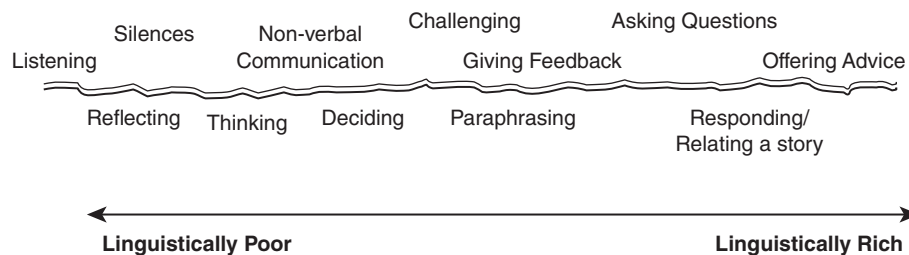


Figure 31.2 Interactions in the coaching process

Research methods to explore the coaching ‘waterline’

Having established that there is more research to be done in this area, we now move to explore what methods we might use to inform studies of the interaction. Sommer and Sommer (2010: 12) have suggested that in social science four techniques – observation, experiment, questionnaire and interview – account for more than 90% of the articles in the journals. However, although observation is well-suited for researching what people do in public; experiments help decide between alternative explanations or approaches to a phenomenon; action research is appropriate for developing new models and questionnaires and interviews are acceptable for finding out peoples’ attitudes and perspectives, researching a private, confidential, interpersonal interaction is difficult. We may need new methodologies in order to help us explore exactly what happens in the coaching interaction.

In fact, what we have termed the ‘waterline’ area of coaching is probably not researched because it is quite challenging methodologically and ethically. It may involve some form of

interruption to coaching sessions, which could be an anathema to the researcher and the participants. It could be obtrusive and it may be time-consuming. However, this should not discourage researchers when they are in pursuit of the reality of coaching. It may just be that we need new research strategies in order to research at the dyad interface.

In Figure 31.2 we also show how the varieties of interaction in coaching can be placed on a continuum from those that are linguistically rich – such as asking questions, responding or giving feedback, to those that are linguistically poor – like listening, reflecting, silence, thinking and deciding.

These linguistic distinctions suggest that we need at least two different approaches to research. Methods for uncovering what happens in the linguistically ‘rich’ end of the spectrum might involve recordings and videos of speech and interaction during the coaching session followed by the use of conversation or discourse analysis approaches. Such analysis usually only involves the researcher in interpreting the data. At the linguistically ‘poor’ end of the spectrum research will require self-observation methods, which involve the participants in reporting (and possibly analysing) their own practice, often in situ.

Two methods that we consider appropriate for researching the ‘linguistically poor’ interactions are Systematic Self-Observation (Rodriguez, & Ryave, 2001) and the Experience Sampling Method (Hektner, Schmidt, & Csikszentmihalyi, 2006). These methods could also augment linguistic methods and enrich a study.

Examples of research designs that could incorporate these methods might be:

- using experience sampling as part of a Grounded Theory study to contribute towards a theory of phenomena, such as questioning;
- using individual Case Studies and systematic self-observation to explore listening or video vignettes to examine non-verbal communication;
- using phenomenological approaches to describe coach and client experiences of paraphrasing;
- designing an Action Research study to explore silence, reflectivity or non-verbal behaviours with co-researchers over time;

Research is still needed about peripheral phenomena such as, outcomes, the coaching context, the models and the emotional or perceptual changes in clients, but the elements of coaching that are constructed at the point of the interaction also need urgent attention from researchers. We hope that these ideas will prompt further research.

The way ahead for coaching research

In this chapter we have highlighted how research, by necessity, has lagged behind practice as coaches were faced with working in ambiguous and uncharted territories. But coaching research has now reached a level of maturity where it has something meaningful to say to practitioners about their practice and can help inform them as to what constitutes effective and ethical coaching. Maintaining the dialogue between practice and research is critical to producing a robust body of evidence. Coaching journals such as the *International Journal of Evidence Based Practice*; *Coaching: An International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice*; *International*

Journal of Mentoring and Coaching; *Mentoring and Tutoring* and the *International Coaching Psychology Review* all publish practitioner-based research and are excellent sources of evidence-based practice.

However, the role of research gatekeepers, such as universities, journal editors and funding bodies may need to be monitored. As mentioned earlier there is a growing number of coaching journals that currently publish a range of quantitative and qualitative research, but a problem may arise as those journals mature and seek a more elite status that they cease to acknowledge the value of publishing exploratory, qualitative studies. Then a difficult situation arises for an applied field like coaching. A disjunct occurs between theory and practice. Papers with a clear exploratory stance and some practical application can sometimes be rejected by journals on the grounds that they do not have a large enough sample size or that they have not used a control group. Similarly universities may only support research by academics who produce papers for the elite journals, while funding bodies are notoriously only interested in large-scale, quantitative studies, rather than practitioner-based research.

Our review of the coaching literature further suggested that current research can be categorized as either outcome or process studies and that broadly outcome studies tended to use quantitative methods, although few were RCTs and process studies used a more qualitative approach. To overcome this lack we consider that the enhancement larger quantitative studies will only occur from genuine dialogue with the smaller qualitative studies that are exploring coaching and allowing factors and variables to emerge from practice. Similarly the results of RCTs require challenge out in the field of practice. Research is not an end in itself but a way of constructing an evidence base for practice.

Whilst considering the evolution of coaching research and the tendency to focus on outcomes and process, we noticed a gap in the research. Little has been done to explore the interactions between coach and coachee *in vivo*. We believe that significant research is needed in this area in order to justify the practice of coaching.

If we look at what could usefully be the focus of research in the future, as well as exploring elements of the interaction in order to understand what constitutes coaching, there also appears to be a significant need to test the entire model of coaching. Specifically coaching suffers from the same issue as therapy – our clients are not uniform. Addressing this ‘uniformity myth’ we might adjust the oft-cited comment by Paul (1967: 11) to relate to the coaching context: ‘*what* coaching, delivered by *whom*, is most effective for *this* client with *that* specific issue and under *which* set of circumstances?’

Getting to grips with such a range of variables in order to study coaching is a mighty task and one which requires a range of methodological approaches. However, the diversity of the approaches will add to the depth of our understanding of coaching only if they are fully reported in terms of the research activity. For example, it should be clearly identified what kind of coaching was carried out, from what theoretical perspective, in what manner and to what purpose. Otherwise we are in danger of comparing apples with pears from a research process perspective. This further requires practitioners to be aware of coaching models and philosophies so that they can generate and contribute to rigorous debate.

FURTHER READING

Three useful reviews of coaching research:

- Stern, L. & Stout-Rostron, S. (2013). What progress has been made in coaching research in relation to 16 ICRF focus areas from 2008–2012? *Coaching: An International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice*, 6(1), 72–96.
- Grant, A., Passmore, J., Cavanagh, M., & Parker, H. (2010). The state of play in coaching today: A comprehensive review of the field, *International Review of Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, 25, 125–67.
- Grant, A. (2013). The efficacy of coaching, in Passmore, J., Peterson, D., & Freire, T. (Eds), *The Wiley-Blackwell handbook of the psychology of coaching and mentoring*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 15–39.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- From the perspective of the development of a coaching profession, what is the most important area that coaching research should focus on?
- How could practitioners undertake rigorous research on their own practice and then report and share their findings?

REFERENCES

- Baron, L. & Morin, L. (2009). The coach–coachee relationship in executive coaching: A field study. *Human Resource Development Review*, 20(1), 85–106.
- Bennett, J. L. (2006). An agenda for coaching-related research: A challenge for researchers. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, Vol 58(4), 240–249.
- Berry, R. M., Ashby, J. S., Gnlika, P. B., & Matheny, K. B. (2011). A comparison of face-to-face and distance coaching practices: Coaches' perceptions of the role of the working alliance in problem resolution. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, 63(4), 243–53.
- Carey, W., Philippon, D. J., & Cummings, G. G. (2011). Coaching models for leadership development: An integrative review. *Journal of Leadership Studies*, 5(1), 51–69. doi: 10.1002/jls.20204
- Clutterbuck, D. (2001). *Everyone needs a mentor: fostering talent at work*. London: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.
- Cook, J. (2013). Coaching: an expensive conversation or a return on investment. *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring*. Special Issue No. 7, 115–24.
- Cox, E. (2010). Last things first: ending well in the coaching relationship, in Palmer, S. & McDowell, A. (Eds) *The coaching relationship: Putting people First: The Interactional Aspects of Coaching*, London: Routledge. 159–181.
- Cox, E. (2011). Coaching philosophy, eclecticism and positivism: A commentary, *Annual Review of High Performance Coaching and Consulting*.
- Cox, E. (2012). *Coaching understood*. London: Sage
- de Haan, E. & Stewart, S. (2011). *Relational coaching: journeys towards mastering one-to-one learning*. John Wiley & Sons.
- de Haan, E., Culpin, V., & Curd, J. (2011). Executive coaching in practice: What determines helpfulness for clients of coaching? *Personnel Review*, 40(1), 24–44.
- de Haan, E. (2008a). I doubt therefore I coach: Critical moments in coaching practice. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, 60(1), 91–105.
- de Haan, E. (2008b). I struggle and emerge: critical moments of experienced coaches. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, 60(1), 106–131.
- De Meuse, K., Dai, G., & Lee, R. (2009). Does Executive Coaching Work: A Meta analysis study. *Coaching: An International Journal of Theory. practice and research*, 2(2), 117–134.

- DiLillo, V., Siegfried, N. J., & Smith West, D. (2003). Incorporating motivational interviewing into behavioral obesity treatment. *Cognitive and Behavioral Practice*, 10(2), 120.
- Dingman, M. E. (2004). *The effects of executive coaching on job-related attitudes*. (Doctorate), Regent University, Virginia Beach, VA.
- Duijts, S., van den Brandt, P., & Swaen, G. (2008). The compatibility between characteristics of employees at risk for sickness absence and components of a preventative coaching intervention, *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring*, 5(1), 30–41.
- Ellinger A., & Bostrom, R. (1998). Managerial coaching behaviours in learning organisations. *Journal of Management Development*, 18(9), 752–771.
- Ellinger A. D. (2003). Antecedents and consequences of coaching behaviour. *Performance Improvement Quarterly*, 16(1), 5–28.
- Ellinger, A. D., Hamlin, R. G., & Beattie, R. S. (2008). Behavioural indicators of ineffective managerial coaching. *Journal of European Industrial Training*, 32(4), 240–257.
- Evers, W. J., Brouwers, A., & Tomic, W. (2006). A quasi-experimental study on management coaching effectiveness. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, 58(3), 174–182. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/1065-9293.58.3.174>
- Fillery-Travis, A. & Lane, D. (2006). Does coaching work or are we asking the wrong question? *International Coaching Psychology Review*, 1(1), 23–36.
- Fillery-Travis, A. & Passmore, J. (2011). A critical review of executive coaching research: a decade of progress and what's to come. *Coaching: An International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice*, 70–88.
- Franke, R. H. & Kaul, J. D. (1978). The Hawthorne experiments: First statistical interpretation. *American Sociological Review*, 43, 623–43.
- Garbutt, J. M., Highstein, G., Yan, Y., & Strunk, R. C. (2012). Partner randomized controlled trial: study protocol and coaching intervention. *BMC Pediatrics*, 12, 42.
- Graham, S, Wedman, J. F., & Kester, B. G. (1993). Manager coaching skills: Development and application. *Performance Improvement Quarterly*, 6(1), 2–13.
- Grant, A. (2013). The efficacy of coaching, in Passmore, J., Peterson, D., & Freire, T. (Eds), *The Wiley-Blackwell handbook of the psychology of coaching and mentoring*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 15–39.
- Grant, A. M. (2003). The impact of life coaching on goal attainment, metacognition and mental health. *Social Behaviour and Personality*, 31, 253–64.
- Grant, A. M. & Cavanagh, M. J. (2007). Evidence-based coaching: Flourishing or languishing? *Australian Psychologist*, 42(4), 239–54.
- Grant, A. M., Passmore, J., Cavanagh, M. J., & Parker, H. (2010). The state of play in coaching today: A comprehensive review of the field. *International Review of Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, 25, 125–67.
- Grant, A. M., Green, L., & Rynsaardt, J. (2010). Developmental coaching for high school teachers: Executive coaching goes to school. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, 62(3), 151–68.
- Gregory, J. B. & Levy, P. E. (2011). It's not me, it's you: A multilevel examination of variables that impact employee coaching relationships. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, 63(2), 67–88. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0024152>
- Hegstad, C. D. & Wentling, R. M. (2005). Organisational antecedents and moderators that impact on the effectiveness of exemplary formal mentoring programs in Fortune 500 companies in the United States. *Human Resource Development International*, 8(4), 467–87.
- Hektner, J., Schmidt, J. & M. Csikszentmihalyi. (2006). *Experience sampling method: Measuring the quality of everyday life*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Hill, C. E. & Corbett, M. M. (1993). A perspective on the history of process and outcome research in counseling psychology. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 40(1), 3–24.
- Kampa-Kokesch, S. (2002). Executive coaching as an individually tailored consultation intervention: Does it increase leadership? *Dissertation Abstracts International: Section B: The Sciences and Engineering*, 62(7-B), 3408.
- Kombarakaran, F. A., Yang, J. A., Baker, M. N., & Fernandes, P. B. (2008). Executive coaching: It works! *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, 60(1), 78–90. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/1065-9293.60.1.78>

- Levenson, A. (2009). Measuring and maximizing the business impact of executive coaching. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, 61(2), 103–121. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0015438>
- Luthans, F. & Peterson, S. J. (2003). 360-degree feedback with systematic coaching: Empirical analysis suggests a winning combination. *Human Resource Management*, 42(3), 243–56.
- McGovern, J., Lindemann, M., Vergara, M., Murphy, S., Barker, L., & Warrenfeltz, R. (2001). Maximizing the impact of executive coaching. *Manchester Review*, 6(1), 1–9.
- McLaughlin, M. (2013) Coaching for brave leadership, *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring*, Special Issue No 7, 125–39.
- Morgan, H., Harkins, P., & Goldsmith, M. (2006). The right coach, in Gallos, J. V (Ed.), *Organization development. A Jossey-Bass reader*. Wiley.
- Nowack, K. M. (2009) Leveraging multirater feedback to facilitate successful behavioral change. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, Vol 61(4), 280–297.
- Olivero, G., Bane, K. D., & Kopelman, R. E. (1997). Executive coaching as a transfer of training tool: Effects on productivity in a public agency. *Public Personnel Management*, 26(4), 461–69.
- Orenstein, R. L. (2006). Measuring executive coaching efficacy? The answer was right here all the time. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, 58(2), 106.
- Passmore, J. & Gibbes, C. (2007). The state of executive coaching research: What does the current literature tell us and what's next for coaching research? *International Coaching Psychology Review*, 2(2), 116–28.
- Passmore, J. (2008). *Diversity in coaching: Working with gender, culture, race an age*. London: Kogan Page.
- Pearson, E. S., I., J. D., Morrow, D., & Hall, C. R. (2012). The CHANGE Program: Comparing an Interactive versus Prescriptive Obesity Intervention on University Students' Self-Esteem and Quality of Life. *Applied Psychological Health and Well Being*, 4(3), 369–89.
- Peterson, D. B. (1993). Measuring change: A psychometric approach to evaluating individual coaching outcomes. *Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, San Francisco, CA.
- Prywes, Y. (2012). *Examining the influence of goal attainment scaling on changes in goal attainment in a coaching versus non-coaching context*. Columbia University.
- Rocco, T. S., Landorf, H., & Delgado, A. (2009). Framing the issue/framing the question: A proposed framework for organizational perspectives on sexual minorities. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 11(1), 7–23. doi: 10.1177/1523422308328528
- Rodriguez, N. And Ryave, A. (2002) Systematic Self Observation. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Ruderman, M. N. & Ohlott, P. J. (2005). Leading roles: What coaches of women need to know. *Leadership in Action*, 25(3), 3–9.
- Seamons, B. L. (2006). *The most effective factors in executive coaching engagements according to the coach, the client, and the client's boss*. Saybrook Graduate School And Research Center, USA.
- Smither, J. W., London, M., Flautt, R., Vargas, Y., & Kucine, I. (2003). Can working with an executive coach improve multi-source feedback ratings over time? A quasi-experimental field study. *Personnel Psychology*, 56(1), 23, 23–44.
- Spence, G. & Oades, L. (2011). Coaching with self-determination in mind: Using theory to advance evidence-based coaching practice. *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring*, 9(2), 37–55.
- Starman, J. (2007). *The impact of executive coaching on job performance from the perspective of executive women*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Capella University. Minneapolis, MN.
- Thach, E. C. (2002). The impact of executive coaching and 360 feedback on leadership effectiveness. *Leadership and Organization Development Journal*, 23(4), 205–214.
- Togel, G. & Nicholson, N. (2005). *Multisource feedback, coaching and leadership development: Gender homophily in coaching dyads*. Paper presented at the Academy of Management.
- Torres, L. A., Navarro, M. C., Fontcuberta, J. M., Brun, N. B., Ortiz, J. C., Fontan, J. B., & Rodriguez, J. M. (2012). Is the scale for measuring motivational interviewing skills a valid and reliable instrument for measuring the primary care professionals motivational skills?: EVEM study protocol. *BMC Family Practice*, 13(1), 112.

- Wasylyshyn, K. M. (2003). Executive coaching: An outcome study. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, 55(2), 94–106.
- Wasylyshyn, K. M., Gronsky, B., & Haas, J. (2006). Tigers, stripes, and behavior change: Survey results of a commissioned coaching program. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, 58(2), 65–81. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/1065-9293.58.2.65>
- Wenzel, L. H. (2001). *Understanding managerial coaching: The role of manager attributes and skills in effective coaching*. Colorado State University.
- Wolfrd, T. (2003). *Executive coaching project: Evaluation of findings*. San Francisco, CA: CompassPoint Non-profit Services.